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SUBJECT: MBEKI PUBLICLY DETAILS SAG EFFORTS TO FORGE NEW  
ZIMBABWE CONSTITUTION

[1](#)1. (U) President Mbeki publicly described South Africa's past role in "informal talks" about a new Zimbabwean Constitution, during a February 5 South African Broadcasting Corporation television interview. Mbeki said the Zimbabwean parties had completed negotiations and provided him with a copy of the constitution "initialed by everybody." Following the completion of talks, the South Africans expected the process to move forward, but Mbeki said that "new problems arose among themselves." Until now, Mbeki said that the Zimbabwean parties did not want South Africa to discuss its role in these talks.

[1](#)2. (U) Both factions of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change denied Mbeki's claim that their party and President Mugabe's ZANU-PF had agreed on a new constitution. SAPA reported February 9 that Morgan Tsvangirai said he was "in shock" at Mbeki's remarks, and rival Welshman Ncube admitted only that the MDC held informal talks with ZANU-PF legal secretary Patrick Chinamasa. Ncube said the talks "never bore fruit."

[1](#)3. (SBU) Comment: This marks the first time Mbeki has publicly discussed South Africa's behind-the-scenes role in assisting ZANU-PF and MDC to negotiate a new, "compromise" Zimbabwean constitution. Mbeki's remarks came up at the end of a lengthy interview on a range of foreign and domestic topics. His comments may signal that he believes the prospects for reviving the Zimbabwean "compromise constitution" are slim (or nonexistent). Mbeki may also wish to answer critics who claim that South Africa has done little to try to solve the political crisis in Zimbabwe. End Comment.  
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